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The Obligations of a People to their faithful Miniſter.

REPRESENTED IN A

DISCOURSE

PREACHED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev^d. Mr. SAMUEL BURFORD,

SEPTEMBER 4, 1755.

By *BENJAMIN WALLIN.*

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TO THE

CHURCH of CHRIST, meeting in *Manſel-ſtreet, Goodman's-Fields.*

BELOVED BRETHREN,

THIS Diſcourſe is made public at your deſire and the requeſt of ſome others, and, I hope, the ſatisfaction you expreſſed in hearing will not be abated by reading the things I delivered; and that they will prove of ſome advantage to thoſe who peruſe them.

THE ſubject, however unpleaſing to ſome, will not be diſagreeable to thoſe who ſeek the honour and peace of *Zion*, neither will they think it unſeaſonable when the duties which belong to a church-ſtate are ſo much neglected; among other cauſes of this evil, that of an extravagant regard for every new appearance, which hath of late prevailed,

is

is none of the leaſt. Many Proteſtant Diſſenters, under a notion of promoting what ſome call the reformation, ſeem to make light of their profeſſion, and are deaf to the intreaty of the inſpired Apoſtle, conſidered in the following Sermon: But, herein, they are greatly deceived! The way to reform is for every one to keep cloſe to the truths and ordinances of the goſpel. Are perſons rouſed from a ſupine ſtate by the zeal of any who are of a different perſuaſion, and tempted to follow them? It becomes ſuch to examine their own profeſſion: Do they find themſelves in an error? Let them openly renounce it, and faithfully avouch what appears to them right: But, are they confirmed in the truth of what they have embraced? Then let them abide therein, and hold it faſt: In my opinion, the moſt ſpecious methods taken to reform a lukewarm generation of profeſſors, which agree not to this are vain and deceitful: They tend to confuſion; and they who aſcribe

ſcribe this to GOD deny his * word and diſhonour his Name.

I BELIEVE, my Friends, the more you examine our profeſſion by the ſcriptures, notwithſtanding the contempt thrown upon it by ſome, the plainer you will ſee its divine authority; however, I think, it muſt be allowed, that ſo far as it appears to be right, whatever tends to a good reformation, will alſo tend to engage you to obſerve it. Take heed, therefore, and be not carried away by the zeal, popularity, piety, or ſeeming ſucceſs of any into an omiſſion of thoſe things which you are perſuaded to be of GOD.

SOME may be forward to cenſure this advice; but I deſign no unkind reflection on any; much leſs to hinder thoſe who preach the word, and thereby ſincerely attempt the good of mankind. We ought to rejoice, and herein I do rejoice if, in any place, or by any perſon CHRIST is made

* 1 COR. xiv. 33.

made known, and ſinners are ſaved; but, is it neceſſary to a chriſtian-ſpirit, or to the wiſhing others ſucceſs in their lawful endeavours, that a man ſhould become indifferent to any one doctrine, or ordinance which he hath received on conviction? Put on charity, my Friends, and wiſh well to all that love the LORD JESUS CHRIST, but, at the ſame time, hold faſt your profeſſion, without wavering.

I HAVE preſumed the above hints, as a needful caution in general, at this time, and ſhall be glad to find them of ſervice. That you may enjoy the divine preſence, and be a flouriſhing and happy people under the Paſtor you have obtained, is the earneſt prayer of,

BRETHREN,

Your affectionate Servant,

In the LORD,

BENJAMIN WALLIN.

Porter's Buildings, Southwark, October 1, 1755.

THE Obligations of a People, &c.

AT the deſire of this Church, who have now ſeparated our beloved Brother to the office of their Paſtor, I am to give them a word of exhortation. I am ſenſible of my own inſufficiency for ſo difficult a ſervice, but I hope, my Friends, that while I addreſs you on this ſolemn occaſion, you, and all here preſent, will attend with candor, and I ſhall, as aſſiſted, attempt a diſcharge of the province aſſigned me from what is written in

I THESSALONIANS v. 12, 13.

And we beſeech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the LORD, *and admoniſh you; and to eſteem them very highly in love for their work's ſake. And be at peace among yourſelves.*

THESE verſes contain the unanimous requeſt of the Apoſtles and others to the *Theſſalonians*, concerning their behaviour in a church-ſtate. And happy would it be, if, in every place, thoſe who ſtand in this relation were conformed to the wholeſome advice! This would revive our glory, and highly recommend the communion of ſaints. The exhortation is given in an earneſt and affectionate manner. *We beſeech you, brethren.** The faithful may be ſtiled brethren, as they have one father, are partakers of the like ſpiritual nature, and have the ſame inheritance; and thoſe who are united in church-relation are brethren in a peculiar ſenſe, and as ſuch they ſhould own and behave towards each other; nor ſhould any of ſuperior talents and ſtation diſdain to acknowledge the leaſt of his fellow members, for CHRIST himſelf; ſuch is his adorable condeſcenſion! Though he is the Son of GOD, yet, having took upon him the nature of the children † *is not aſhamed to call them brethren.* Now, under this endearing character, the Apoſtle addreſſes theſe believers, and beſeeches them with a fervency

* MATTHEW xxiii. 8.

† HEBREWS ii. 11.

fervency which bespeaks the importance of his request.

Two things are considerable in the text.

I. How the disciples are to behave towards their ministers. And,

II. What they are enjoined among themselves.

The words principally relate to the conduct of these saints towards their ministers, and it will suit my design chiefly to insist upon this; and the following things deserve our notice in this branch of the subject; namely,

I. A description of gospel ministers.

II. The behaviour incumbent on a people towards them. And,

III. The argument used to engage their compliance.

I. We have a description of gospel ministers, and they are described to be those *who labour among the Saints*, who are *over*

them in the LORD, and who *admonish them*. My business, indeed, is to remind you of the people's obligation rather than to set forth the character of their minister, nevertheless, as each particular in this account is a motive to the behaviour required, it demands our attention. And,

I. MINISTERS are described to be those who *labour among them*. Gospel ministers are stiled * labourers, which, among other things, denotes the pains and diligence required in a discharge of their office, and proves the ignorance, or unfaithfulness of those who make it an idle profession. Ministers are labourers sent forth into the field, harvest, or vineyard of the LORD of Hosts; they are to plough up the fallow ground, *i. e.* to reprove and convince unregenerate sinners, and fruitless professors; they are compared to them who sow and reap, and are said to build and plant and water; nor is the intense study, earnest preaching, and other branches of the ministerial work less fatiguing to the flesh than these laborious employments. But this part of the description doth not terminate in the simple character of a labourer, but takes in the manner

* LUKE x. 2. 1 Cor. iii. 9.

manner in which they labour, for it is added, *among you.* GOD is a GOD of order, and hath appointed every miniſter his charge, on which he ought to attend. To rove about under the character of a chriſtian miniſter may ſuit oſtentatious, and deſigning men, but is inconſiſtent with the relation of a Paſtor in the Church of CHRIST: The Apoſtles, indeed, and ſome others, being called and ſeparated to the work of Evangeliſts, rarely continued long in a place; they endured painful journies, and dangerous voyages, while they ſpread the goſpel throughout the world; but this is not the duty, neither ſhould it be the practice of ordinary miniſters, ſince nothing can be plainer than that in every place, where churches were ſettled, it was incumbent on the Elders to take heed to the flock * *over the which the Holy Ghoſt had made them Overſeers.* Some men go out into the world, and, like wandering ſtars, they ſhoot from one place to another, and thereby draw to themſelves many, who, captivated by this appearance, with admiration, follow them, as ſomewhat more than common, but I ſee no warrant in Scripture to juſtify this conduct in ordinary miniſters, where

* Acts xx. 28.

where the goſpel hath obtained, and, therefore, however ſpecious the practice, it appears to me an human contrivance, and not of Divine appointment. The conſtitution of CHRIST's Church, and the cuſtom of the ſaints in the Apoſtles' days manifeſtly ſhew, that whatever occaſional call the Paſtors of churches may have to miniſter elſewhere, their ſtated and conſtant labours are required among thoſe who are committed to their charge. It is part of the character of a goſpel miniſter that he labours *among them* over whom he is placed: And herein lieth much of the *labour* and *honour* of his work. Again,

THESE Miniſters are deſcribed to be *over them in the Lord*. Not merely as having the overſight of them; this, indeed, is included in their office, but the word is different from that which is rendered * *overſeers* and *biſhops*: It is a † military term which points out the rule and preſidency which theſe miniſters have in the church to go before the people, as leaders and captains,

* ACTS xx. 28. Philip. i. 1. Επισκοπους.

† Προϊσαμενους: It is uſed Rom. xii. 8. *He that ruleth.* See alſo 1 Tim. iii. 3, 4 and 12 verſes.

captains, to direct and encourage them in their chriſtian warfare: Thus it expreſſes the dignity of their ſtation, and the nature of their employment, and is no inconſiderable argument for paying them the reſpect required, and it likewiſe ſheweth that when miniſters are compared to labourers it is not to convey any contemptible idea of their ſtation. My Friends, you will allow me, on this occaſion, to magnify an office of which I am unworthy: It may be diſgraced, or deſpiſed by ſome; nevertheleſs, it is an high ſtation, and truly honourable; but, of this hereafter. This preſidency, however, is limited; it is *in the Lord*. Which may denote the extent of the miniſter's province, and ſhew that it relates only to ſpiritual concerns; it may likewiſe expreſs the motive of a faithful miniſter to be for * *Jeſus ſake*: Or, rather, I apprehend that it principally regards his authority; that he acts by commiſſion from, and in the name of the LORD, and, conſequently, that he is ſubject to his will, and muſt account to him, by whom he is intruſted with this miniſtration. And further,

IT is ſaid, concerning theſe miniſters, *and admoniſh you*, *i. e.* put you in mind of your

* 2 COR. iv. 5.

your duty, and exhort you to be diligent and fruitful in your profeſſion. As military officers frequently muſter, review and exerciſe the ſoldiers who are under them, to ſee that they are ready to engage the enemy on the ſound of the trumpet, and who valiantly march before them to animate their courage, thus, goſpel miniſters, by their inſtruction, and example, are to keep in order, and to excite the people under their care; they are not to connive at ſloth, backſlidings, and diſorders, but to * *preach the word, be inſtant in ſeaſon out of ſeaſon, reprove rebuke, exhort with all long-ſuffering and doctrine.* In, one word, they are as much, as in them lieth, to ſee to it, that every one, being active in his ſtation, may fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold of eternal life. But, alas, this is impoſſible, when, as is too much the caſe, church-members will not hearken to the voice of our text, and regard their *Overſeers.* And this leads,

II. To conſider the behaviour incumbent on a people towards their miniſter. And, according to this intreaty of the Apoſtle, they ſhould *know them and eſteem them*

* 2 Tim. iv. 2.

them very highly in love. But, to prevent mistake, or prejudice, before I enter upon the consideration of these, I shall premise two things.

1. The direction is universal. None are excepted from this obligation. It is not expected that you should every one shew the same instances of regard to your minister, for your talents are different, but, each of you are required to know and esteem him in love. And further,

2. Observe, that this respect is demanded for those ministers who answer the character in the text; not for those who assume to themselves, or loiter in the office, nor for them who, having received this ministry, leave their flock in pursuit after the pleasures or profits of the world, and are negligent of their duty; no; this respect is required for those only who, being chosen and separated as the scriptures direct, reside and labour among their people, and fill up their station: Under these limitations what objection, or excuse can take place? Can there be any reasonable pretence for refusing to own and esteem the faithful servant of CHRIST, and your Souls? Such a minister, I am persuaded, you will find in

our Brother, and, I hope, you will treat him accordingly.

THESE things premiſed, I proceed; and

I. YOU are required to *know* your miniſter. *We beſeech you*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *to know them which labour among you*. Now this cannot be underſtood ſimply of knowing their perſons, for how could they be ſtrangers to the perſons of thoſe who ſtatedly miniſtred among them? The knowledge required is practical; it calls upon you to own and uſe your miniſter in his office, and to behave towards him as becomes his character; and, I apprehend, that in this paſſage it ſignifies the ſame with the obedience and ſubmiſſion recommended in *Hebrews* xiii. 17. And it is a knowledge which includes the following things.

1. *ATTENDANCE on his miniſtry*. There is an abſolute neceſſity for this. Time would fail to ſet forth the abſurdity, and pernicious conſequence of neglecting this branch of duty; yet, alas, the evil is daily encreaſing! But, hereby perſons moſt unreaſonably withdraw themſelves from the inſpection of him who watcheth for their ſouls, they weaken the foundations of church fellowſhip, and in a great

great meaſure defeat the end of the paſtoral office. Sickneſs, or ſome of the various and unavoidable occurrences of life, may, for a ſeaſon, prevent this attendance, but frequent and unneceſſary abſence is very unbecoming, and a conduct highly ungrateful, neither is it leſs grievous to an affectionate miniſter; let me beſeech you, therefore, to know your Paſtor by a conſtant attendance upon him. But

2. *A READINESS to receive inſtruction from him,* is alſo included. There is a wide difference between an implicit credit of our teachers, and a diſpoſition to receive exhortation from them; the former baſely infringes on the rights of conſcience, ſets aſide the rule of faith, and is calculated for thoſe who make merchandiſe of ſouls, but, the latter is moſt reaſonable, and, indeed, without it a people come ſhort of their duty. This diſpoſition is what the Apoſtle ſtiles * *ſuffering the word of exhortation,* and receiving the word † *with all readineſs of mind.* It ſtands oppoſed to ſloth and prejudice, and conſiſts in a ſincere endeavour to underſtand and improve the report of your miniſter. And they who perſue this becoming frame will be given to meditation, to ſearching the ſcriptures, and

* Hebrews xiii. 22. † Acts xvii. 11.

to examine themſelves, things which, there is reaſon to fear, are too much neglected, but which greatly conduce to edification. And,

3. THIS knowledge, likewiſe, includeth *a chearful practice of thoſe things he requireth from the word of GOD.* This exhortation affects the whole of your conduct in public and private life. However, perſons may attend their own Paſtor, and ſeem to receive his inſtruction, if, at the ſame time, they walk unbecoming the goſpel, they contradict themſelves, and come ſhort of their duty. If perſons are carnal and covetous, diſorderly and licentious, they in effect diſown a ſound goſpel miniſtry, which always teacheth to deny the fleſh, with its corrupt affections and luſts: Such men, whatever pretences they make to religion, are enemies to the croſs, and a diſgrace to the miniſter they attend; but, I hope, this will not be charged on any of you. Again,

4. IT implies *a freedom in converſation with him.* Some chriſtians know little or nothing of their Paſtor in this ſenſe; but whether this may ariſe from too high or too low an opinion of themſelves, or from indifferency; or from whatever cauſe this

ſhyneſs

ſhyneſs proceeds, it ſeems inconſiſtent with that regard the text requires. It diſcourages an affectionate miniſter, and is an hindrance to his uſefulneſs, when his people, and, eſpecially, when the elders of his church become ſtrangers to him: But happy are they, who maintain an intimate friendſhip with their Paſtor, and delight in his company! And,

5. THIS knowledge requires, that you do what you can to *encourage and comfort him:* You are to be careful not to grieve your miniſter, but to ſeek his welfare and peace; and, under this head, you will ſuffer me to remind you, that this takes in a kind and generous proviſion for him, and his family, as you are able, for you know, brethren, that as under the law a plentiful portion was appointed for them who waited on the altar;* *even ſo hath the* LORD *ordained*

* 1 Corinthians ix. 14. And Proverbs xii. 10. A righteous man is ſaid to regard, or *know*, (יודע) the life of his beaſt, in which place knowledge is evidently uſed in the above ſenſe: and if it becometh a righteous man to provide things neceſſary for the ſupport and comfort of his *beaſt* that ſerveth him, how much more ſhall it be thought becoming in them who are faithfully ſerved by a *fellow Saint*, in the capacity of a miniſter, to uſe their beſt endeavours for his comfortable maintenance? The like argument

ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. And further,

6. * *It includes your earnest and constant prayers. Brethren, pray for us,* saith the Apostle; and, again, *I beseech you, for the LORD JESUS CHRIST's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to GOD for me.* Prayer is the breath of the Christian, and joint supplications in the Churches of CHRIST a principal service: And it is to be lamented, that with so much difficulty these seasons of prayer are maintained. But, Brethren, your Ministers need your prayers, your prayers we request, and your prayers for us are necessary for the obtaining success to our labours among you. May you be a praying people; and remember that this is one branch of knowledge due to your minister, that you cease not to mention him always in your prayers.

THUS, Brethren, you are to *know* your minister, by a practical acknowledgment of

ment is used, by the Apostle, to enforce this duty, 1 Cor. ix. 9. *Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the Corn. Doth GOD take care for Oxen?*

* HEBREWS xiii. 18. Romans xv. 30.

of him in the ſeveral inſtances mentioned, but, in order to this it will be neceſſary that you preſerve an unfeigned eſteem for him, and accordingly this is required, for,

II. THE Apoſtle beſeeches theſe Saints for their miniſters, that they * *eſteem them very highly in love.* His direction, you ſee, hath reſpect not only to the external behaviour, but likewiſe to the frame and diſpoſition of the mind. Eſteem, you know, ſtands oppoſed to contempt, and conſiſts in an high regard for the object as truly valuable: It is a kind of veneration which will naturally produce a reſpectful behaviour. The leaſt fellow chriſtian is precious, and ſhould be honoured by us, as the object of divine love, the ſubject of true holineſs, and the heir of eternal glory; beſides, we *are* † *every one members one of another*, and ſhould therefore eſteem each other in the LORD; hence, ſaith the Apoſtle, ‡ *let each eſteem other*

* THUS it is exhorted, Phil. ii. 29. hold ſuch *in reputation*; (ἐντίμους) *i. e.* let ſuch be *honoured* or *precious*, as the word is rendered, 1 Pet. ii. 7. and agreeable to this it is directed, 1 Tim. v. 17. that the Elders who rule well, ſhould be counted worthy of double *honour*, where the ſame word is uſed.

† ROMANS xii. 5. ‡ Phil. ii. 3.

other better than themſelves. But there are degrees of eſteem, and miniſters are to be eſteemed *highly*; yea, *very highly*, which ſhews that a common reſpect is not ſufficient. You ſhould guard againſt low and mean thoughts of your Paſtor, as inconſiſtent with the reſpect which is due to his character, for he is to be *very highly eſteemed.* And further, this eſteem is directed *in love.* Love is the leading grace, and highly neceſſary. The reſpect required for a goſpel miniſter is not a ſervile one, which would be contrary to the genius of chriſtianity, and, indeed, all things performed among the ſaints are to *be done in charity.**

THIS, Brethren, is required of you in behalf of your Paſtor, to *know him*, and to *eſteem him very highly in love.* An honour conferred on every faithful ſervant of CHRIST. Who would not bluſh at the thoughts of being the ſubject of this grace? And will not they be aſhamed who, on reflection, are conſcious of ſlighting their miniſter? But I come

III. To conſider the argument. Many things might be urged as motives to this behaviour;

* 1 COR. xvi. 14.

behaviour, but the chosen plea in the text is the minister's work, * *for their works' sake*. And this naturally leads to enquire what things relate to your Pastor's service, which should excite you to follow the Apostle's advice. And,

1. THE *dignity* of his work is of principal weight in the argument. This is no mean service, but an employment the most honourable: To preach the everlasting gospel in the name of JESUS, to feed the flock of GOD, and to watch for the souls of men; to be an instrument of turning sinners from darkness to light, and of edifying the church of CHRIST, will be acknowledged by those who have a proper sense of divine things, to be a glorious employment. And,

2. THE *difficulty* of his service greatly enforces the argument. The text represents it a laborious office. To study and preach as becomes the ministerial character is universally allowed a weariness of the flesh;

* OBSERVE it is not said for their *own sake*: Ministers are no better in themselves than the least of their brethren; the gift is bestowed at the divine pleasure, and the honour conferred on the subjects of this grace entirely relates to their sacred employment. It is for the sake of *his office*, and not of *his person* that this special regard is to be shewn to a minister of CHRIST.

beſides which there are various other duties in this miniſtry which try the ſpirits of men. They who make light of the work, and come ſhort of their duty, will be found ignorant or ſlothful, for the labour of this ſervice is abundantly manifeſt in the New Teſtament; and, all things conſidered, no duties are more painful and difficult than thoſe of a goſpel miniſter. But to proceed,

3. THE *importance* of his work is another conſideration which ſtrengthens the plea. However, infidels may traduce this office, and profanely repreſent it impertinent, or worſe, he that believes revelation muſt own it an ordinance from heaven, and of great importance to mankind. This office is no leſs important than painful and glorious, for * *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of GOD: How ſhall men believe on him of whom they have not heard. And how ſhall they hear without a preacher?* The miniſterial function is neceſſary, by the counſel of GOD, to the ſalvation of ſinners. This office is ſettled in the church, by divine appointment, for the pulling down the ſtrong holds of Satan, and for promoting the Redeemer's kingdom in the world. And indeed the great importance of this Service, together with the honour and

* ROM. x. 14, 17. compared.

and difficulty which attend it may well occaſion thoſe who ſuſtain it to ſay, with the Apoſtle; * *Who is ſufficient for theſe things?* Again,

4. THE *credit* of his work calls for this behaviour towards your Paſtor; for when miniſters are not known and eſteemed by their people it brings their office into contempt, and that in the eyes of the world: But who would not deprecate being the occaſion of this? And, once more,

5. THE *ſucceſs* of his labour pleads for the ſame. It ſeems not without reaſon to think, that when the Apoſtle beſeeches the prayer of the *Romans, for the LORD JESUS CHRIST's ſake, and for the love of the ſpirit*; he intends that they ſhould pray for him as they deſired to ſee the intereſt of JESUS, and the work of the ſpirit proſper among them: A cogent argument with true believers, who have nothing more at heart than the glory of the Redeemer in the ſalvation of ſinners. Succeſs, indeed, depends on the divine bleſſing: † *It is GOD that giveth the Increaſe.* But it is found that the behaviour enjoined is ſubſervient to uſefulneſs, for it is rarely, if ever, ſeen that a people flouriſh under a deſpiſed miniſter;

* 2 COR. ii. 16. † 1 COR. iii. 7.

Nor, my Friends, can you expect advantage from the labours of your Paſtor, if by any means you ſhould ſlight him. But I proceed,

II. To conſider what the Apoſtle enjoins the Diſciples among themſelves, namely, *Peace*. *And be at peace among yourſelves.* You know, brethren, the importance of attending to this, having ſeen ſome melancholy effects of a contrary ſtate. The communion of Saints is built upon peace with GOD through the blood of JESUS, and one would think that a fellowſhip thus eſtabliſhed muſt needs be attended with peace; yet, alas, through one ſad occaſion and another, many have been the diviſions in the Church of CHRIST! But, ſurely, they who profeſs to be united in the hope of ſalvation, under the Prince of Peace, ought to be at peace among themſelves!

But, let it be obſerved, that the peace enjoined conſiſts not in an indifferency about the faith and converſation of perſons in communion; it is not intended to prevent the dealings of a church with diſorderly and erroneous perſons; nor can any thing be more perverſe than to draw this inference from the words, ſeeing the Apoſtle immediately

diately adds, * *warn them that are unruly.* The faithful are not, under a notion of preſerving peace, to neglect the diſcipline of GOD's houſe; this would be fatal folly, for that kind of eaſe in a church which is the effect of this conduct is a falſe peace; its ſeeming advantages are tranſitory, while roots of bitterneſs will ſecretly be gathering which, when they ſpring up, will trouble and defile. Remember that truth and holineſs are eſſential to the peace which the Goſpel recommends.

To be at peace among yourſelves, in general, is,

1. To watch againſt any occaſion of animoſities and diviſions. And,

2. To ſtudy every thing which tends to peace and edification, or, as it is expreſſed by the Apoſtle, † *to follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.* I ſhall, therefore, briefly remind you of ſome things which conduce to Peace in a chriſtian community, and draw to a cloſe. And the firſt thing I would mention is,

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* 1 Cor. iii. 12. † Rom. xiv. 19.

MUTUAL and unfeigned love. * Charity goeth before peace. The peace of a church depends much on the cordial affection of the members one towards another; therefore, brethren, as *Peter* adviseth, † *above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.* To this join

CONFORMITY in judgment. Thus saith the Apostle, ‡ *be of one mind, live in peace.* In the present state differing sentiments will appear among the saints, but it seems necessary to peace that those, who are in church-relation, should be of one mind in things of importance; and I apprehend, that when they are not of the same judgment in points that are essential to salvation and communion §, there is little hopes of lasting peace; for, ‖ *can two walk together except they be agreed?* But then,

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* Tim. ii. 22. † 1 Pet. iv. 8. ‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

§ The essentials to these are distinct; men are encouraged to hope for salvation in a way of obedience, but every thing essential to church communion is not essential to salvation; and, I apprehend, the faithful may differ in their sentiments on the former, and practice accordingly, with mutual affection; however, it is very needful that persons in fellowship should be agreed in the mind of CHRIST concerning the communion they hold, otherwise I cannot see how true peace can be long maintained among them.

‖ Amos iii. 3. Rom. xv. 1.

FORBEARANCE must alſo be exerciſed in things which are not eſſential. No man ſhould be tenacious of his private opinion to the uneaſineſs of others; and they who are chief in the houſe of GOD ſhould be examples of ſelf-denial. The Text ſheweth that honour is due to every member according to his ſtation and uſe in the church, but they are unhappily miſtaken who make their ſuperior capacity an argument for pleaſing themſelves, for thoſe that are * *ſtrong* ought to bear the infirmities of the *weak*. And for want of attending to this ſome have troubled the church of GOD. Beſides which,

A READINESS to forgive thoſe who have offended, is likewiſe requiſite. Nothing is more contrary to the ſpirit of the Goſpel, or more inconſiſtent with peace among the brethren, than an implacable and unforgiving ſpirit, † *Be ye therefore kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST's ſake hath forgiven you.* Again,

IMPARTIALITY is of importance to the ſame end. *Obſerve theſe things*, ſaith the Apoſtle, ‡ *doing nothing by partiality*. Partiality conſiſts in *preferring one before another*, as when one perſon is honoured and ſerved, and

* Rom. xv. 1. † Epheſ. iv. 32. ‡ 1 Tim. v. 21.

and another, under the like circumſtances, is deſpiſed and neglected: This you muſt avoid as you would preſerve the peace of your community. And further,

It greatly promotes the peace of a church, when *each member acts in his place*: The want of this tends to confuſion, which is oppoſite to peace; ‡ *But GOD is not the author of confuſion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the ſaints.* Moreover,

A STRICT adherence to the word of CHRIST in every public tranſaction, is another thing which makes for peace; when this rule is not regarded in caſes preſcribed, and many ſuch caſes there are, it becomes an offence, and hath often been the occaſion of uneaſineſs. And then,

Frequent prayer-meetings and ſpiritual conference will conduce much to this bleſſing. Theſe meetings, indeed, are ſlighted by many profeſſors, and neglected by ſome in favour of aſſemblies; which are not ſo becoming their character; but ſuch exerciſes are a means of knitting the diſciples in love; and it is found that where they are maintained peace and harmony prevail. In one word,

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† 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

A REVEREND behaviour in your church aſſemblies will be ſubſervient to this happy ſtate. Many diſorders have proceeded from the lightneſs of ſome perſons on theſe ſolemn occaſions. But, my Friends, when, in the ſimplicity of your hearts, you come together as a church before the LORD, remember that he is in the midſt of you; and that your GOD is *greatly to be feared in the aſſembly of the ſaints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.* If you maintain a becoming decency in the houſe of GOD, it will greatly promote your peace and happineſs.

THIS, Brethren, is the ſum; you are to know, *i. e.* to own and uſe our beloved Brother, who is now over you in the LORD, by a conſtant attendance on his miniſtry, with a diſpoſition to receive inſtruction from him, and by a chearful practice of thoſe things which CHRIST hath commanded; you are to know him in a way of friendſhip, and free converſation, by a kind proviſion for his family, and in your daily ſupplications at the throne of grace. You are alſo to highly eſteem him in love for his works ſake, the dignity, labour, importance, credit and ſucceſs of which demand this behaviour towards him.

YOU are, likewiſe, to be at peace among yourſelves, which is not to be maintained by connivance at ſin, or neglect of diſcipline, for this peace is founded on truth and holineſs; this you are to perſue by avoiding every occaſion of ſtrife and diviſion, and by ſtudying the things which make for peace; you are, therefore, to endeavour after unity in affection and judgment, to exerciſe forbearance and forgiveneſs, and to be impartial; you are in all things to conduct yourſelves by the word of CHRIST, to be frequent in prayers and ſpiritual diſcourſe, and to behave with reverence in your church aſſemblies.

Now, Brethren, theſe things are earneſtly intreated of you, and not without reaſon, for your compliance is of great importance: The encouragement of your miniſter, your own reputation, the divine preſence and bleſſing, which are neceſſary to your increaſe; yea, and, even the continuance of your church-ſtate, ſtand nearly connected with this behaviour.

I SHALL make but one reflection on the ſubject, and then conclude.

AND, it appears from this exhortation, that they who go about, by any means, to

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leſſen the regard of a people for their faithful Paſtor, or for one another, act in direct oppoſition to the known mind, and viſible intereſt of JESUS CHRIST: This is the buſineſs of Satan, for which he hath but too many inſtruments. Happy the church which hath no vain perſon within itſelf; a tale-bearer, or buſy body, whoſe whiſperings and privy ſlanders ſow the ſeed of jealouſy, and alienate brotherly love; however, there is not wanting for thoſe who are forward to this evil work; and even ſome under a high profeſſion, and of a public character, by their inſinuations, have diſturbed the peace of the faithful, and prejudiced their minds againſt their miniſters. From ſeveral of St. *Paul*'s epiſtles, we learn, that ſome boaſting teachers, who intruded themſelves, cauſed diviſions, and even obtained to ſink that great man in the eſteem of many among whom he had laboured. Thus confident and oſtentatious men, in every age, and with too much ſucceſs, have attempted to ſeduce the unwary; an attempt not unknown in our day; for, in like manner, by crafty and inſinuating methods, many have been drawn aſide to ſlight and forſake their affectionate guides; but they, who thus depreciate the faithful ſervants of the LORD, and divide his people, however ſpecious their pretence,

reſiſt the mind of CHRIST, are enemies to the peace of his ſaints, and are to be ſhunned by all who wiſh well to *Zion*.

AND now, Beloved, I hope, that you will find the things I have ſpoken agreeable to the word of GOD, and regard them accordingly; and I am perſuaded, that my honoured Brethren in the miniſtry, who are preſent, will join with me in applying the exhortation. "We beſeech you, Brethren, "to know this our Brother, who is hence-"forward to labour among you, be over "you in the LORD, and admoniſh you: "We beſeech you to eſteem him very "highly in love for his works ſake, and "be at peace among yourſelves." And will not every one in this congregation unite in praying that the LORD may bleſs you, and cauſe his face to ſhine upon you, that he would pour out a plentiful meaſure of his Spirit on you, and your Paſtor, and that the ſettlement you have now obtained may long continue, that, having reſt, ye may walk in the fear of the LORD, and in the comforts of the HOLY GHOST, and be multiplied: In one word, may the ſame mercy be granted in the churches whereunto we ſeverally belong; yea, and to all the churches of JESUS CHRIST; to whom be glory for ever. *Amen*.

FINIS.

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